

March 24, 2009

Dear Representative:

We are writing to urge you to cosponsor the **H.R. 1671, the Meth Mouth Prevention and Community Recovery Act**. This legislation would address an unforeseen consequence of the methamphetamine epidemic: the growing need for costly dental care.

In areas where people have regular access to the drug, more and more dentists have been encountering patients with a distinct and often severe pattern of oral decay. The condition (known as "meth mouth") is characterized by teeth that are blackened, stained, rotting, and crumbling or falling apart.

Dental problems are common among drug users. Many do not care for their teeth regularly and most do not see a dentist often. But methamphetamine seems to be taking a unique and horrific toll inside its users' mouths. Restoring a meth user's teeth can cost anywhere from \$7,000 to \$14,000, according to some estimates. The damage is sometimes so severe that extraction is the only viable treatment option.

Little is known about what actually causes meth mouth. Some have speculated that the drug's ability to dry the mouth and the tendency of users to grind and clench their teeth are factors. However, few peer reviewed studies have been published about its prevalence, its causes, or its cost to the public.

This bill, if passed into law, will fund local, school-based initiatives to educate primary and elementary school students about the oral health aspects of meth use. It will also enhance federal research and promote a series of continuing education activities for dentists to learn more about substance use disorders and their relationship to oral health and dental care.

Oral health is inextricably linked to overall health and well-being. Those with substance use disorders are no exception. We urge you to cosponsor this bill, which will comprehensively address the oral health problems associated with methamphetamine use and strengthen dentistry's role on the health care team. Should you have any questions or wish to arrange for a meeting, please contact Mr. Seth Burroughs in Representative Rick Larsen's office. Seth can be reached at 202-225-2605 or Seth.Burroughs@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

Academy of General Dentistry
Alliance of the American Dental Association
American Academy of Oral Medicine
American Academy of Periodontology
American Association of
Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Association of
Public Health Dentistry
American Dental Association
American Dental Education Association

American Student Dental Association
Association for Medical Education and
Research in Substance Abuse
Association of State and Territorial
Dental Directors
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
Delta Dental Plans Association
Hispanic Dental Association
National Dental Association
Therapeutic Communities of America